

The Alexander Thomson Society NEWSLETTER

Nº 10 MAY 1994

SAVED: "Thomson's Finest Villa"



FOR SALE:
Thomson-designed Garnkirk Vase
Glass from Thomson's Office

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

**Trips to Tor House, Mount Stuart,
Holmwood and Liverpool!**



ACTIVITIES

VISIT TO BUTE

Saturday, 11th June

THE ISLAND of Bute can boast one of the precious few buildings by Thomson outside Glasgow. This is Tor House at Craigmore which, thanks to the kindness of Mr Alfredo Zavaroni, we shall visit in the afternoon of Saturday, 11th June.

First, however, we shall see a house in a style of which Thomson came deeply to disapprove: Mount Stuart, the astonishing Gothic Revival pile designed by Robert Rowand Anderson and others for that great builder and patron of the arts, the Third Marquess of Bute. We had hoped to visit Mount Stuart last year but our late, lamented patron, John, Sixth Marquess of Bute, asked us to postpone the visit as the Great Hall was then full of scaffolding. We will now have the privilege of seeing the splendours of Mount Stuart thanks to the kindness of Lady Bute and the

newly formed Mount Stuart Charitable Trust.

The visit to Bute presents logistical problems. Firstly, our numbers must be restricted to 25, *Members Only*. Those who have already enjoyed the experience of seeing Mount Stuart are therefore invited to forego the pleasure on this occasion.

Secondly, we propose to travel from the pier at Rothesay to Mount Stuart in a fleet of taxis, to avoid the necessity of bringing cars or a coach over on the ferry (if anyone still intends to take a car over the Chairman would be obliged if he could be informed).

The cost of the trip (excluding ferry charges) is expected to be about £10. If you wish to come, please apply with a stamped addressed envelope to the Chairman at 1 Moray Place, G41 2AQ.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

WE HAVE been asked to help to make sure that two new buildings by Thomson can be enjoyed by the public on the next Doors Open Day—Saturday, 17th September—by providing the necessary complement of volunteers to be on duty. This is obviously a very good cause and in our interest, so the committee very much hopes that we can respond to these pleas.

The first is the other half of the Double Villa, 25 Mansionhouse Road, Langside, where Mrs Ballantine will be glad of assistance. The second is *Holmwood* for which, as yet, the National Trust for Scotland has no staff or guides.

If you are able to assist with this worthy attempt to encourage interest in Thomson's architecture, please contact the Chairman at 1 Moray Place.

Evening Visit to Holmwood

Tuesday, 14th June

THE NATIONAL Trust for Scotland have invited us to visit their new acquisition. This is an opportunity to see the whole interior of Thomson's house before work begins on restoration. We shall therefore view *Holmwood* at 6.00p.m. on Tuesday, 14th June. Booking is not necessary.

DIARIES OUT FOR 1995!

IN 1995, Thomson's Birthday on 9th April falls on a Sunday. To mark this anniversary we therefore plan our first weekend away visit—to Liverpool.

One good reason for visiting Liverpool is to have a thorough tour of one of the buildings which Thomson regarded as "unquestionably the finest in the kingdom": St George's Hall, a monumental Corinthian composition designed by Harvey Lonsdale Elmes and completed by C.R. Cockerell. But there are also many other architectural riches in the city as well as a surviving Neo-Thomsonian building by the elusive Audsley Brothers. We provisionally plan to leave Glasgow on the afternoon of Friday, April 7th, and return in the evening of Sunday, April 9th, and we hope to stay at the magnificent Adelphi Hotel. At present it is difficult to estimate the cost of this weekend, but we hope it will not be much over £100.

This is a new venture for us, which ought to be very enjoyable as well as rewarding. We therefore hope many of our members—together with spouses, partners and friends—may wish to come. Early booking will greatly assist the planning of this event, so the Chairman now welcomes applications together with a £10 deposit per head and a stamped-addressed envelope. Please support this venture.

Thomson Broadsheet

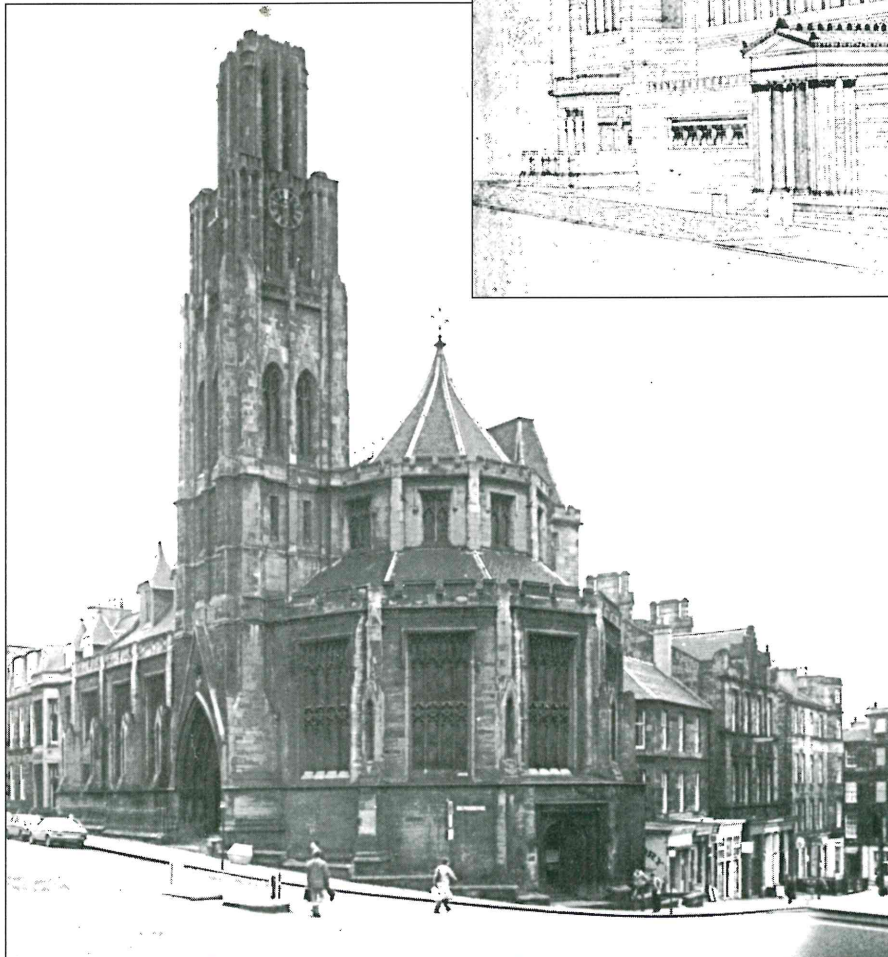
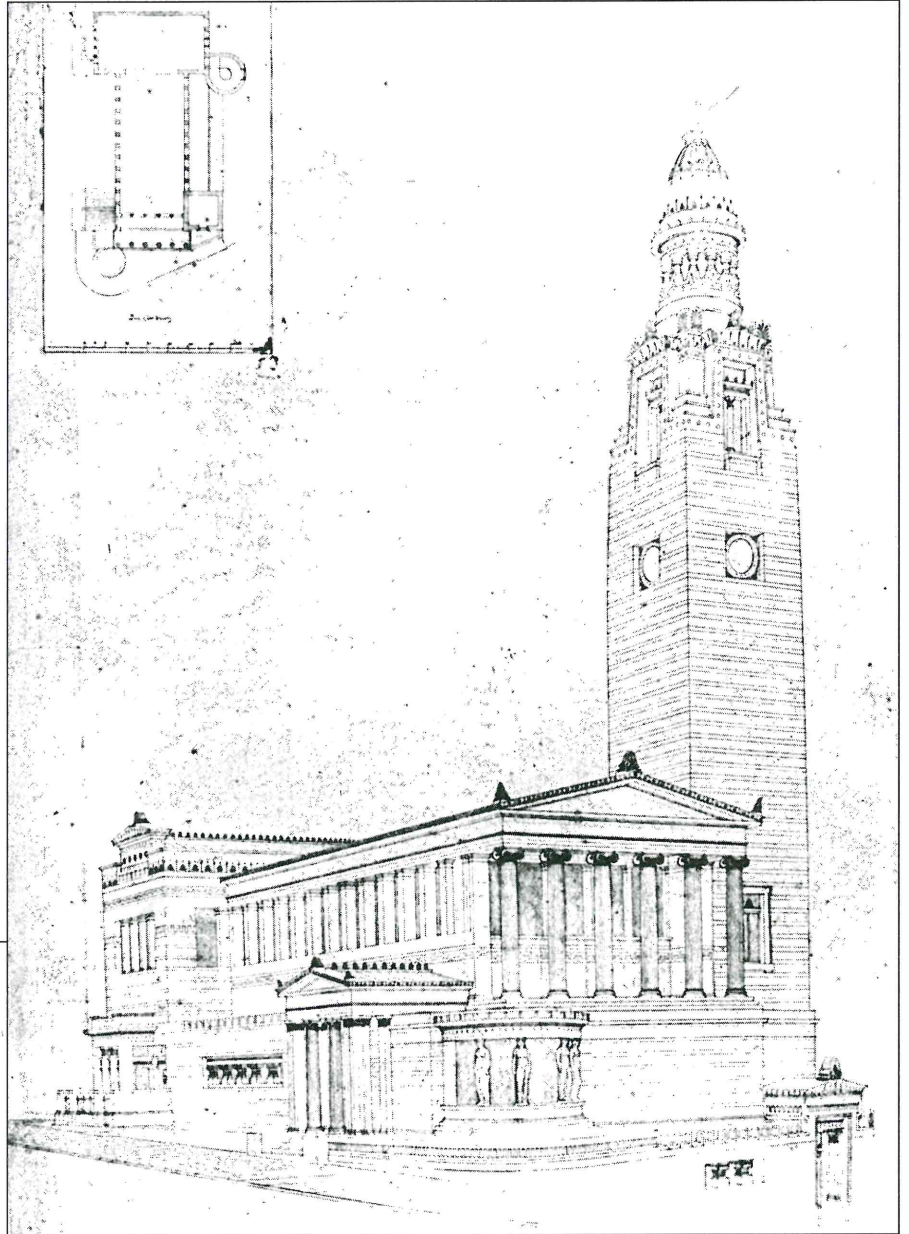
GSA ENTERPRISE Ltd at the Glasgow School of Art, in conjunction with Artbank, has now published the first of a planned series of architectural broadsheets depicting elevations of buildings drawn in line and to a constant scale. This first publication is devoted to Alexander Thomson and is similar to the familiar broadsheets published abroad illustrating the work of such architects as Palladio and Schinkel.

This handsome broadsheet, or poster, measures 840 by 595 mm (33" x 23") and includes 26 important buildings by Thomson, both extant and demolished. It is available at the Glasgow School of Art Shop, 167 Renfrew Street, Glasgow G3 6RQ, for a mere £5.95 (excluding postage and packing). Future broadsheets will illustrate the work of two other great Glasgow architects: J.J. Burnet and C.R. Mackintosh.

A Case of Mistaken Identity?

ONE OF the depressingly few surviving drawings by Thomson is an unsigned and undated perspective view of a church on an awkward sloping site in the collection of the Glasgow School of Art. This design, which bears a superficial resemblance to the St Vincent Street Church, and which adorns the dust-jacket of Ronald McFadzean's biography, is an unexecuted project. Had better counsels prevailed, it shows what might have risen, not in Glasgow, but in the Athens of the North.

This drawing is usually described as being an unsuccessful competition entry of 1858 for St George's Church in Edinburgh. However, Professor David Walker points out that, "the Thomson drawing does not correspond with the original site of St George's in Lothian Road (the ground falls too rapidly in the drawing) or with the present site (which is dead flat) or with any of the other sites considered for the new church...



"But it does exactly correspond with that of St Mary's Free Church on the corner of Albany Street and Broughton Street. This, by J.T. Rothead of 1859, after the removal of its crown (*see picture, left*) and the most ghastly mutilation of the tower, was demolished about 12 years ago for an office block. The Gothic manse remains. As built it really was a fine thing, with a splendid clerestoried neo-Perpendicular apse which in fact contained the gallery stair.

"If the Thomson design had been built I think it would still have been standing today."

NOT THE QUEEN'S PARK TERRACE?

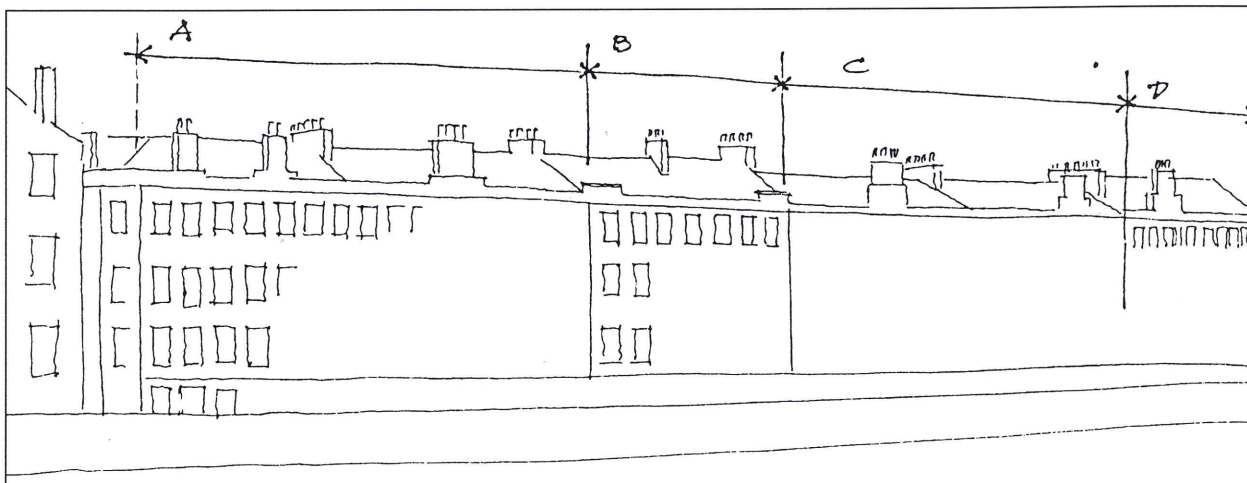


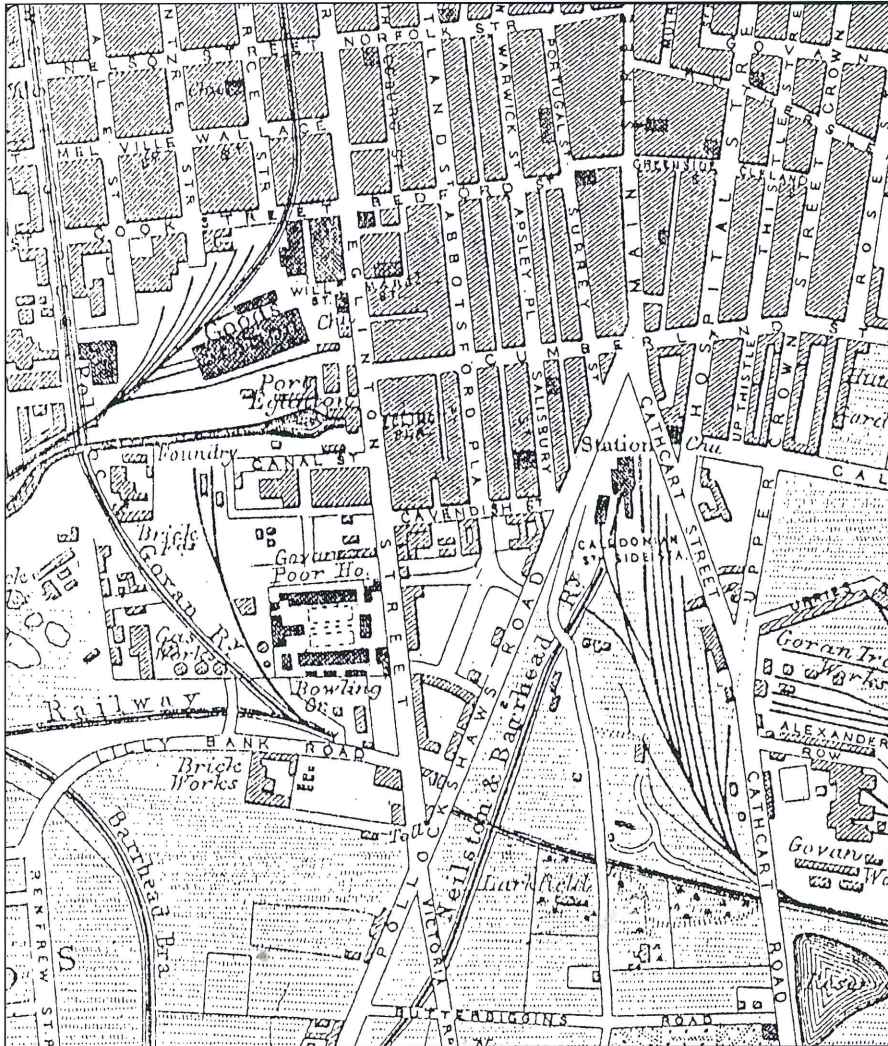
This charming photograph, dated 1859, shows Thomson's Queen's Park Terrace in Eglinton Street, seen across the Wellcroft bowling green—soon to be swept away by the Caledonian Railway's main line into Central Station. It was published in *Glasgow As It Was* Vol. II by Michael Moss and John Hume (1975, plate 15). But is it the Queen's Park Terrace? The details and general configuration are similar, but the chamfered corner on the left does not resemble the remarkable concave-faceted column-like termination Thomson created on the corner of Devon Street. In fact, it closely resembles the southern, Turriff Street corner of Queen's Park Terrace. So perhaps the photograph is reversed? No: the lettering on the shop-front reads correctly.

So the suspicion arises that there was a second balancing terrace south of Queen's Park Terrace, presumably designed by Thomson. This supposition is confirmed by maps of the period: the bowling green, which lay immediately to the south of the Govan Poor House (formerly the cavalry barracks: off to the left in the photograph), lay opposite the block which ran south of Turriff Street towards Eglinton Toll. Dr Ronald McFadzean now confirms this: "it is clear that you are right—there was a tenement which was almost identical to the Q.P. Terrace... As to whether this terrace was earlier or later than Q.P. Terrace I cannot say..."

Dr McFadzean records that the title deeds imply that Queen's Park Terrace itself was built in two stages, the northern section first, probably

in 1857, and the southern in 1858, by the builder John McIntyre with William Stevenson and De Hort Baird, both quarriers. So who built the second terrace, and when? The date of the photograph—1859—implies it was roughly simultaneous with Queen's Park Terrace and its appearance suggests it was also built in stages. Dr McFadzean has provided a sketch of the terrace and, having compared it with the elevation of Queen's Park Terrace, concludes that "sections C and D are similar to the northern section of QPT— so is section B but it seems to have been designed to be read independently... The plans for section A are similar to the southern section of QPT. All this leads me to think that the sequence of erection was 'D', 'C', 'B' and finally 'A'.





This mystery terrace fell victim to the ferocious railway assault on Glasgow in the 1870s which threatened to demolish the Caledonia Road Church and which sliced an aisle off the Ballater Street Church (see *Newsletter* N°7). Under an Act of 1873, the Caledonian Railway bypassed its South Side Terminus (which lay right opposite the Caledonia Road Church) and built a new line down to Bridge Street and then across the Clyde into the new Central Station, which opened in 1879. This new line branched from an existing line which tunnelled under Eglinton Street and then cut through the bowling green and the site of the Govan Workhouse. It was a work which evidently required the demolition of most of Thomson's second terrace south of Turriff Street, although a sawn-off two-storey chunk of it, built of Giffnock stone, can be detected in the row of existing red sandstone buildings on the site.

As for Queen's Park Terrace itself, of course, that survived another century before being scandalously destroyed as recently as 1981.

Left: Detail of map of Glasgow c. 1861 showing Eglinton Street

CASES

Egyptian Halls

We continue to be anxious about the forlorn and deteriorating condition of Thomson's most extraordinary commercial building, Egyptian Halls. The absurdity of such a famous and prominent listed building lying derelict in the heart of the city—in Union Street, which is clearly coming up in the world—is compounded by the fact that the four owners of the shops are anxious that something should be done. They have engaged an architect who, for eighteen months, has been trying to initiate a restoration. The obstacle is the Chinese restaurateur who uses part of the first floor and leaves the rest of the upper floors empty. This individual claims that he has a partner in

Hong Kong who owns 50% of the business and who will not co-operate, so rendering him unable to act. Whatever the truth, this is surely an impasse which can only be solved by the District Council taking vigorous action - as it did, so commendably, with N°4 Great Western Terrace. There can surely be no danger of financial loss through compulsory purchase with a potentially valuable commercial property in the city centre.

In considering the present economic viability of Egyptian Halls it is interesting to recall what a success the building was originally. Thomson wrote to his brother George, then in Africa, on 20th

September, 1872, that, the "Union Street property is not quite finished yet and there is only one Shop occupied that of Mr. Ballantyne Tea merchant from Edinburgh and it is said that it is the finest shop in Town. There is another let to Gilbey & Coy great wine importers who have establishments in London, Edinr. and elsewhere—and there are several people after the other two—Mr. Robertson is still unwilling to subdivide the upper floors and although we have had more parties inquiring no one has turned up to take a sufficiently large portion to meet Mr. R's views... Mr. R is determined to get good rents though he should wait a while—He gets £350 for each of the end shops and a third party is willing to give the same for one of the middle shops provided his arrangements otherwise suit—He is at present a member of a large Tea House which is making

Continued on Page 8

HOLMWOOD SAVED

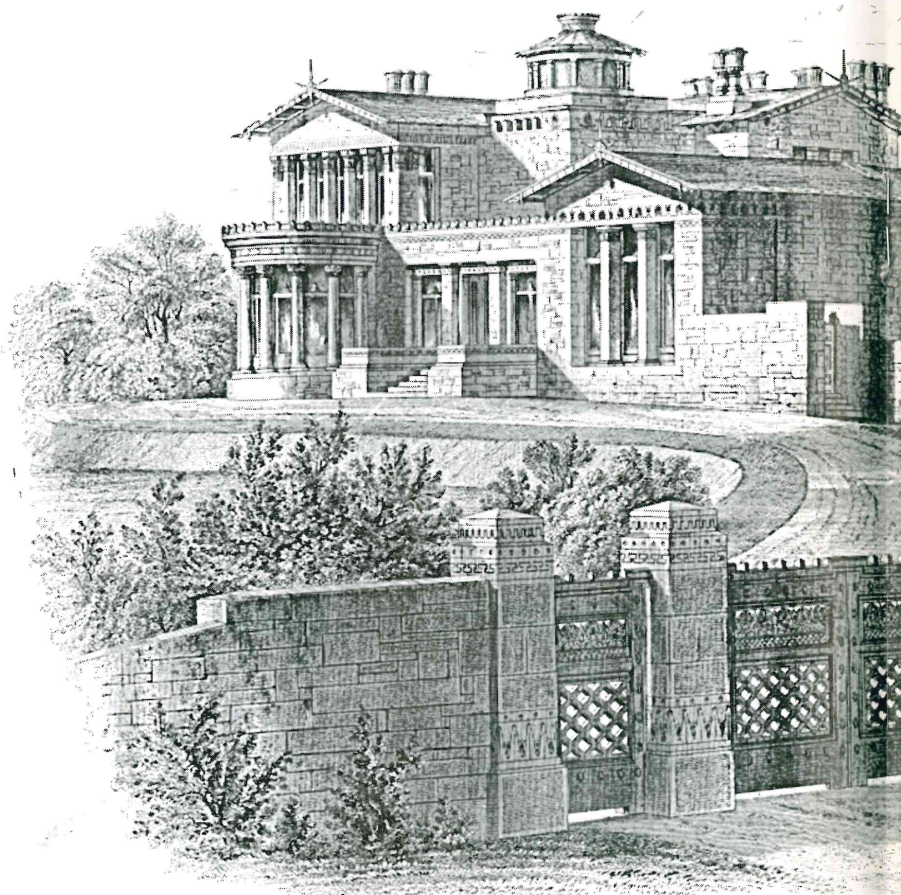
It is with immense satisfaction and delight that we are able to report our first big victory since our foundation three years ago. As hinted at in our last *Newsletter*, Thomson's finest villa, *Holmwood*, has at last been acquired by the National Trust for Scotland, whom we congratulate. This is wonderful news for Glasgow, for the Trust, and for Thomson. Glasgow at last has a masterpiece by Thomson firmly in the public realm and one which will make an admirable compliment to Mackintosh's Hill House at Helensburgh—also owned, of course, by the National Trust for Scotland.

This most satisfactory outcome to a long and worrying battle was made possible by the National Heritage Memorial Fund, which has offered £1.5 million to restore, endow and maintain *Holmwood*. If that seems a large sum, it is worth reflecting that the actual purchase price of *Holmwood*, £450,000 (paid jointly by the National Trust for Scotland and Strathclyde Regional Council), is considerably less than the money paid for the cabinet designed for W.W. Blackie by Charles Rennie Mackintosh which belongs in The Hill House and which, scandalously, was recently sold at Christie's. But we will not comment on the morality, and sanity, of a commercial system which makes one piece of furniture by one of Glasgow's two greatest architects more valuable than a complete building by the other.

Many individuals and organisations deserve great credit for this happy event: The National Trust for Scotland and the Planning Department of Glasgow City Council, together with Strathclyde Regional Council, remained resolute during the long and tortuous negotiations with the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, their solicitors and the potential developers of the grounds of *Holmwood*. The National Heritage Memorial Fund is to be applauded for seeing the virtues of preserving *Holmwood* intact and for being so generous with financial support. We

are loath to blow our own trumpet, but perhaps it should be said that if this society had not taken up the cause of *Holmwood* soon after our foundation in April 1991—with the support of our late Patron, Lord Bute—it is likely that the grounds of the house would by now be covered with blocks of flats as undistinguished as those which, unfortunately, lie either side of the entrance drive off Netherlee Road in Cathcart. And if that had happened, the future of Thomson's villa would have been a very great worry.

We now look forward to working with the National Trust for Scotland on restoring *Holmwood*. Much remains uncertain about the original appearance of the interior and, alas, the furniture Thomson designed for it has long since disappeared. Our hope is that pieces may emerge over



HOLMWOOD, — CATHCART
A. THOMSON, ARCHT.

SCOTT & SON, GLASGOW, 1901

the next few years. What is clear is that underneath the present paint and wallpaper, Thomson's decorative scheme of paintwork largely survives. The text of *Villa and Cottage Architecture*, together with its plates, as well as the glowing praise of Thomas Gildard, make it clear that the original appearance of the rooms at *Holmwood* was gorgeous and extraordinary. We hope that the uncovering of the painted decoration and its recreation will be carried out with the utmost care and using the latest and most conservative techniques. The restoration of *Holmwood*, indeed, could be conducted as an exemplary exercise and serve to raise standards in Scotland. And we applaud the fact that it is the intention of the National Trust for Scotland to take the restoration slowly, for much will be learned and discovered as it proceeds.



F. KENFREWSHIP
ECTS, GLASGOW.

Work also needs to be done to the exterior, of course. The distinctive timber treatment of the overhanging gables, together with the spiky decorative finials, all needs to be replaced, while the stable building has lost its eaves altogether. Furthermore, the crucial, strategic wall which connects the villa with the stables has been penetrated by two garden steps. This wall must be rebuilt; it is the feature which, in particular, seems to link the villas of Thomson with the Prairie Houses of Frank Lloyd Wright. As Gildard observed, it is "an impressive instance of the value of a continuous horizontality." Another alteration which needs to be undone is the window above the entrance which now gives additional light to the staircase. This window does not appear in a photograph of *Holmwood* published in *The*

Builder for 31st December, 1910, which confirms the supposition that not only the mediocre stained glass but the window itself were inserted in c.1920 by the then owner, James Gray.

We need to know much more about the history of *Holmwood*, but already exciting discoveries have been made. The Drawing Room floor has a novel decorative inlaid pattern around the edge, and it is cheering to learn that the marble sideboard in the Dining Room, which was initially used as an altar by the Sisters, survives in one of the out-buildings, as do the decorative pierced iron panels in the entrance gates which are visible in the lovely perspective view published in *Villa and Cottage Architecture*. The society will have an opportunity to see all this on the special visit planned or

the evening of June 14th.

In conclusion, we give Thomas Gildard's description of Thomson's finest villa, given in his lecture to the Architectural Section of the Philosophical Society of Glasgow and first published in 1888 ["Mr Bowie" would seem to have been the house-painter and not the owner, who was, of course, the paper-mill owner James Couper]:

"The *Holmwood* Villa, made familiar to us by Messrs. Blackie's book, has deprived us of either asking or answering the question, Is an architect an artist? If architecture be poetry in stone-and-lime—a great temple an epic—this exquisite little gem, at once classic and picturesque, is as complete, self-contained, and polished as a sonnet. The connecting of the offices with the villa by the unbroken long line of possibly a garden wall, is an impressive instance of the value of a continuous horizontality. This value may be estimated by supposing the wall away, each building apart, solitary, and unsympathetic. By this supposition it will be seen that this mere wall is one of the most important parts of the composition.

"By the kindness of Mr Bowie, I had an opportunity of seeing the interior. I need scarcely say that it was worthy of the remarkable picture I had been studying outside. Unique beauties and ingenious devices were to be seen everywhere. Of the polychromatic decoration of the walls, ceilings, doors, I might also say "it beggar'd all description." Mention is made in the *Spectator* of a lady who could not place a patch without spoiling a beauty, and to hang upon these walls a mirror or a picture would be not merely "a wasteful and ridiculous excess," but a disturbing impertinence. Thomson's idea was to make a room so perfect, so satisfying a work of art, that it was independent of all adventitious means and appliances. "If you have pictures, have a picture gallery." Besides the decoration, much of the furniture, solid and textile, was designed by Mr. Thomson..."

Where is it now?

Egyptian Halls

Continued from Page 5

some change as to its partners just now—If Mr. R. gets £1400 for his shop floor it will pay him pretty well and have him the upper floors for profit—He is very proud of his building—A writer in the *Architect* says of it—“This is probably the architect’s most successful effort, and we doubt if its equal, for originality, grandeur of treatment, or imposing effect, could be found in any city, not excepting the Metropolis itself”—The article was quoted in the *Citizen* and the opinion given above has been often repeated by those whose judgement is worth something...”

*Below:
Egyptian Halls shortly after completion.*

TRADE DESCRIPTIONS ACT

MRS MARGARET Stevenson, of Stevenson & Co. solicitors, has brought to our attention the misleading nature of an article published in the property pages of the *Herald* on April 6th. Entitled ‘Greek Thomson goes Dutch’, this concerns N°338 Albert Drive, now for sale. “Unusually, this house has detailed planning consent for an extension on two levels...” Indeed it does, alas—something we opposed because of the poor quality of the designs proposed. “The unusually tall, narrow semi-detached villa designed by ‘Greek’ Thomson at Albert Drive in Pollokshields seems more typical of the canal front homes of Amsterdam than the more spacious avenues of Glasgow...” begins the article. Apart from the fact that this comparison is drivel, this sentence contains two statements which are, to say the least,

misleading.

No house built in 1877 can be said to be “designed” by Thomson, who had then been dead for two years. Of course, Turnbull may have executed a design by Thomson, but there is no factual evidence either way. Secondly, this is not a “semi-detached” villa but a single villa later divided in two, which renders asinine a comparison subsequently made with the Double Villa.

Back in the 1980s, the purchaser of a house in Surrey successfully sued an estate agent who had stated that the property was designed by Edwin Lutyens when it was in fact the work of Philip Tilden. Perhaps if Thomson’s name is similarly taken in vain, it should at least be welcomed as a sign that his status has risen again as it deserves.



THE GARNKIRK VASE

WE HAVE been offered, at a price, an example of the 'Garnkirk Vase', one of those rare and slightly mysterious Neo-Classical terracotta urns designed by Thomson.

The Garnkirk Vase was designed by Thomson for the Garnkirk Fireclay Company. It was a tall slender urn of a particularly beautiful profile which Thomson used on other occasions—as on the Beattie Tomb in the Necropolis—ornamented with a frieze of figures as well as typical Greek ornament. This was the work of his friend, the sculptor George Mossman. The Garnkirk Fireclay Company made Thomson's extraordinary lotus-bud chimney pots and, in 1857, it opened a showroom at N°243 Buchanan Street with a shop-front and interior designed by Thomson. We know most of this thanks as usual to Thomas Gildard, who wrote how,

"We have seen that polychromatic decoration engaged the attention of the architect. It was part of his system—his scheme of a new Greek. His system was based on principles, and he demonstrated that these principles were universally applicable. Hence, we see in the same style candelabra, vases, obelisks, and other monuments, cast-iron balustrading, furniture

&c... Of vases, there is the magnificent one in fireclay, designed for the London Exhibition of 1851, and of which you may see copies in windows of the Garnkirk Warehouse in Buchanan Street. It will command your immediate regard by its originality and power. The late George Mossman, in fine sympathy with the architect, enriched it with a sculptured procession."

But how many were made? One was exhibited at the Great Exhibition; another was in the Caledonia Road Church. This, much damaged, was rescued by Frank Worsdall shortly before the fire in 1965 and was reconstructed from about sixty fragments. It is (presumably) the one illustrated on page 203 of *The Words and the Stones*, the now very rare, (because suppressed) catalogue of the 1990 *Glasgow's Glasgow* exhibition. Roger Guthrie insists that another example is in the possession of the Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, as it was lent to the Friends of the People's Palace for an exhibition a decade or more ago. Where is it now?

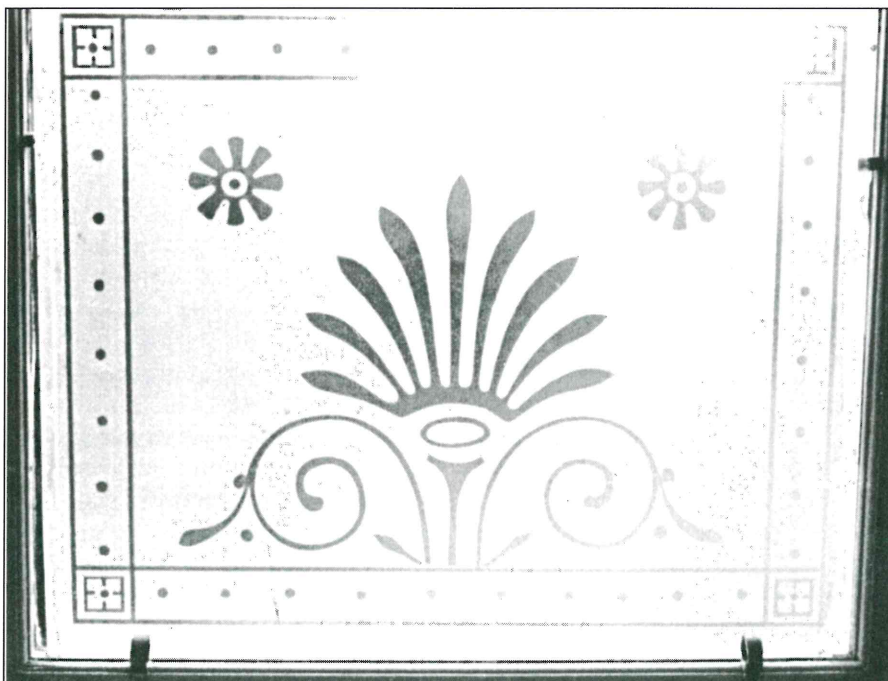
News of any additional sightings of the Garnkirk Vase will be gratefully received. If any member is interested in purchasing the Vase offered to us, please contact the Chairman.



FOR SALE: THOMSON'S WINDAES

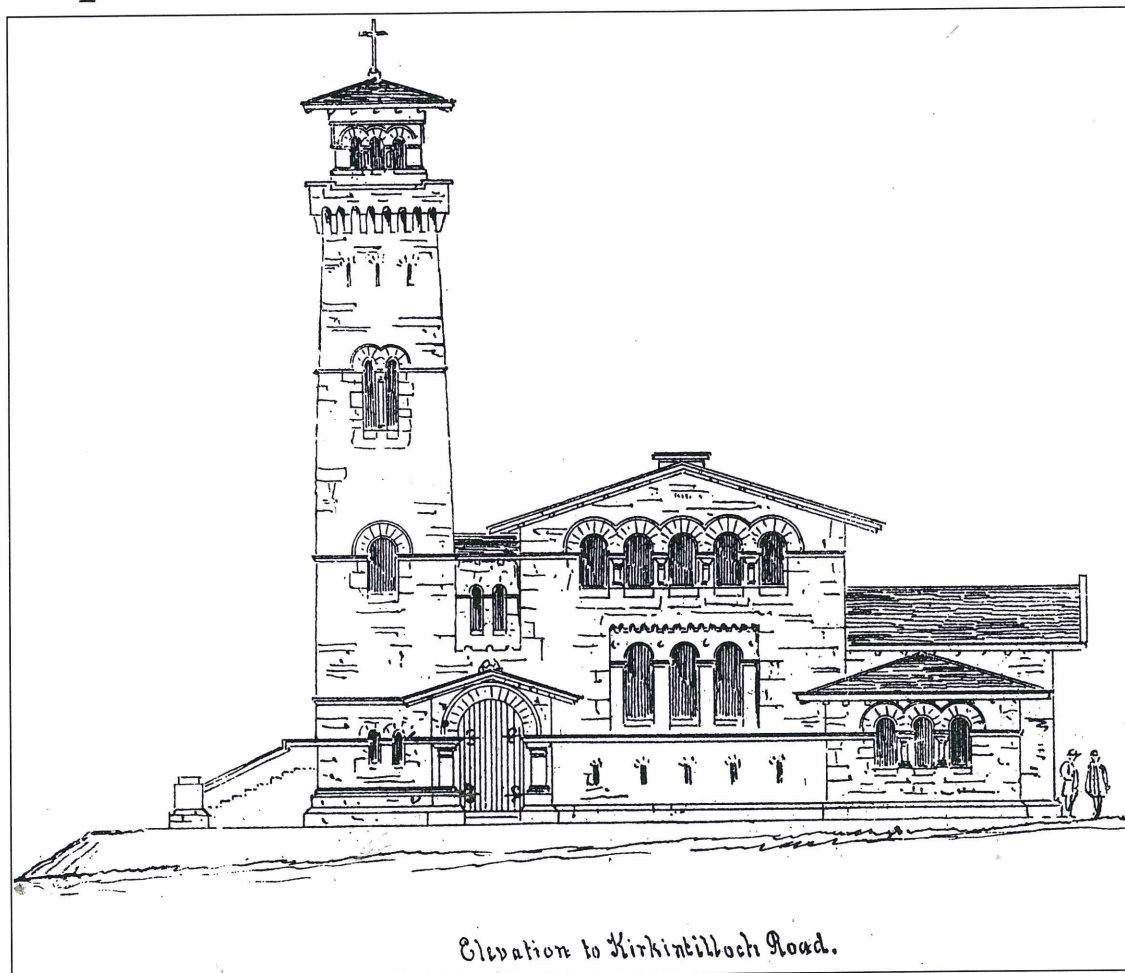
RETROUVIUS Architectural Reclamation have panels of etched glass removed from Thomson's offices in West Regent Street [see *Newsletter* N°6]. There are ten pieces, sized between 19" x 21" and 24" x 46", with either anthemion or Greek key designs (*see picture*).

Contact Maria Speake or Adam Hills at Retrouvius on 041 334 0086.



RUNDBOGENSTIL REVISITED

or the Compromises of Co-partnery



Alexander Thomson's shareholding in *The British Architect* paid dividends that he could scarcely have foreseen: it gained him an unusually careful obituary notice in that journal's pages, one which sheds light on aspects of his interior design practice, to be revealed this autumn in *'Greek' Thomson*, the new book edited by Gavin Stamp and Sam McKinstry, in an essay contributed by Sally Joyce Rush.

It also ensured that a late (1875) unbuilt design out of the Thomson and Turnbull office was preserved for posterity. Clearly, the architect's connection made it easy for such things to be published. The design, illustrated here from *The British Architect* of 19th February 1875, is for the proposed Union Church at Lenzie. The building is quite stunningly Thomsonsque. Its campanile, with shallow pitched roof is, of course, a signature, prefigured in Craig Ailey, *The Knowe*, in a number of other villas

and, in the position illustrated here, at Caledonia Road.

The low pitched roofs, at right angles to express the orientation of the internal, asymmetrically disposed spaces they cover, are particularly characteristic of the villas of ten and twenty years earlier, and the window rhythms have a familiar look about them.

Inside, 318 worshippers were to be accommodated on two levels, access to the galleries necessary for that number being gained, conventionally, through the lower stages of the tower. The central focus of the church was, of course, to have been the pulpit, raised up, accessed from both sides and furnished in a style similar to Caledonia Road or Queen's Park churches.

Outside, however, we are faced with a problem that throws Thomson's authorship into serious doubt: the style of the church, Thomson's individual *rundbogenstil*, or Romanesque,

with its curiously slotted arches (except on the lower frontage, where the windows are surmounted by a characteristic row of inverted U-shaped 'lugs'), had been abandoned by Thomson in the mid-1850s, around the time of the completion of *The Knowe*, Pollokshields! In the Haldane Lectures of 1874, too, Thomson had fulminated against the rounded arch, in which, he stated, "every stone is a wedge", thrusting downwards, and containing the seeds of its own destruction. Here, in the pages of the very journal that published the Lectures, is their visual antithesis! What was going on?

The most likely explanation, it seems, is that in February 1875, the date of the design and only a matter of months away from Thomson's death, Turnbull had been given a free hand. The two men had joined in partnership in 1873, witnessed by the deed they signed then, which still survives. They shared profits in a lop-

The Thomson Memorial

See Page 12

Wallace & Allan, Plumbers	1.1.0
Wotherspoon, Jas. 12 St Vincent Place	1.1.0
Wells, Andw. 206 W. George St	0.10.0
Wharrie, Thos. C.E.	1.1.0
Whyte, John, Assistant Master of Works ...	3.3.0
Wilson, William, Mason	1.1.0
Wingate David, Colliery Inspector	1.0.0
Wallace & Convall, Plumbers	5.0.0
Whyte Robt. Cabinet Maker	5.0.0
Watson Jas. Architect's Assistant	1.1.0
Wilson, Wm. & Sons, Brickbuilders	1.1.0
Young, Robt. 7 Madeira Court	2.2.0
Turner, Colin Plumber	1.1.0

Sub-Total:£720.11.6

Interest from Bank£73.13.7

Total:£794.5.1

[Pencilled note by Mr Joe Fisher, Glasgow Room, The Mitchell Library]:

"The Alexander Thomson Memorial" matter has been supplied by Mr. Shields, one of the Trustees. For an obvious reason I have withheld the sum given by each subscriber, but I may mention that the aggregate score[?] is £794.5.1, including £73.13.7 of Interest from Bank. J.F.'

[Additional pencilled note in the same hand]

'Since the greater part of this little book was written and arranged, I have found some additional material, which I have added, and which may be found in entirety although it goes beyond the promise of the title-page.'

THE ALEXANDER THOMSON SOCIETY COMMITTEE

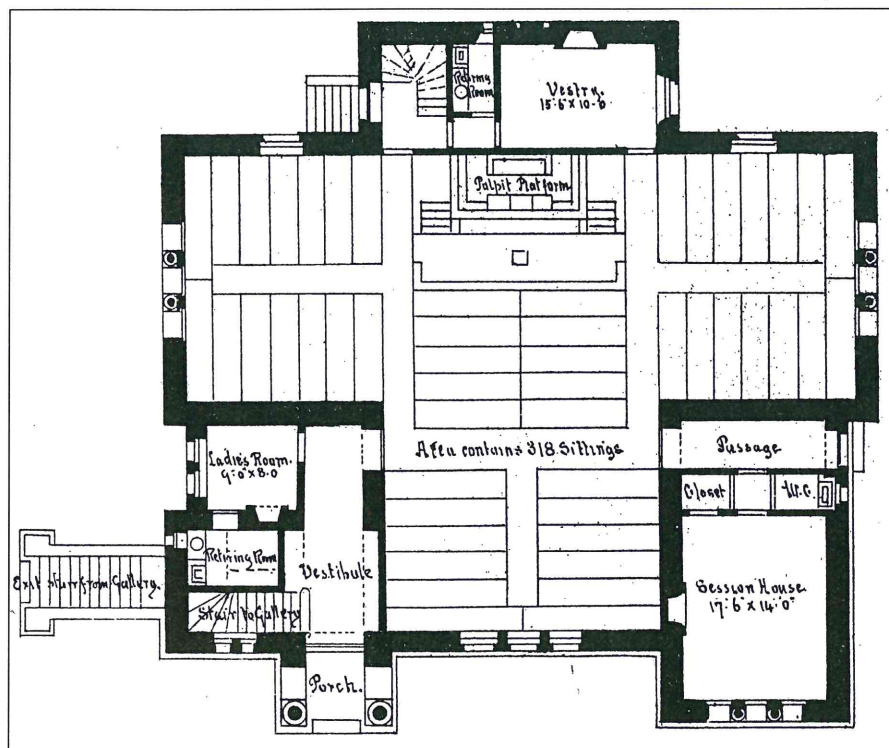
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 Professor Andor Gomme and
 Professor Andrew MacMillan.

BACK ISSUES

OF THE Society's *Newsletter* are available, price 50p each plus 2 second class stamps, from the Hon. Secretary at the Society's address.

MEMBERSHIP LEAFLET

THE SOCIETY has reprinted its membership leaflet. If you know of someone who might be interested in joining the Society, please write to the Hon. Secretary at the usual address.



sided relationship that reflected Thomson's seniority. McFadzean records that Thomson was intermittently ill at the time, although, according to Gildard, working diligently on the town hall design recently brought to light by Brian Edwards (see *Newsletter* N°4).

Adding weight to this interpretation is the fact that Robert Turnbull was a Lenzie man, and it seems likely that, having secured the opportunity to submit this design, he proceeded to provide it himself. After Thomson died, Turnbull went on to develop a whole section of Lenzie to the south of the railway station. Here we find still surviving a large batch of villas, carried out internally and externally in a style which we might describe as Thomson pastiche.

Most of the villas, all built post-1875, are in Thomson Greek idiom, but at 34 Victoria Road, *Sherbrooke*, we can see a re-working of the *rundbogenstil* elements of the church design. A few streets away, a Turnbull school in the same style used to exist, but all that remains is a round-arched cottage, presumably the schoolhouse.

The fate of the design, in the absence of research, can only be guessed for the present. The Lenzie Union Church actually built was in a gutless and towerless Gothic, a pity, since it was not a patch on what was proposed. It remains, and looks cheaper, perhaps, indicating that it was finance that was the problem.

Turnbull was not entirely luckless, however, as alongside the Union Church there stand several of his Greek style villas, making one wonder if the Gothic church was in fact his design. If so, his Gothic is less convincing than his Thomson pastiche.

Finally, the design appears to shed light on the unknown church design in the same style illustrated in Ronald McFadzean's piece in *Newsletter* N°7, and which is in the Mitchell Library. Perhaps that was an earlier version of the one illustrated here. At any rate, it seems unlikely that our hero was guilty of stylistic apostasy, and that Turnbull was responsible for what, to one eye at least, is a good, if heavily derivative, design.

Sam McKinstry

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THE 'ALEXANDER THOMSON' MEMORIAL

DONATED ANONYMOUSLY to the Mitchell Library on 15th September 1952, The 'Alexander Thomson' Memorial' lists those who contributed to the bust of Thomson now in the Art Gallery & Museum, Kelvingrove, and to the creation of the triennial Alexander Thomson Scholarship, still competed for to this day (although with a value which no longer permits the lengthy foreign travel allowed for in the late 19th century).

Written in the hand of Mr John Shields, with additional notes, probably by Mr Joe Fisher of the Glasgow Room, the text is reproduced by kind permission of The Mitchell Library.

"Immediately after Mr. Thomson's

death, the Glasgow Institute of Architects initiated the movement for founding a memorial to him, and having invited the co-operation of Mr. Thomson's non-professional friends, the project was enthusiastically adopted, Subscriptions being received to the amount of £720.11.6, as detailed on the following pages, which, with £73.13.7 of interest accruing, was entrusted, by Registered Deed to the Council of the Glasgow Institute of Architects, with whom are associated, as Trustees for life, Robert Blackie, Publisher, John Mossman, Sculptor, John Shields, Measurer and Rev. John Stark, Duntocher—The above sums having been devoted (1) to

providing the marble bust of Mr. Thomson, executed by Mr. John Mossman, which is in the Corporation Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, and (2) to the purchasing of a feu duty yielding £26.13.1 per annum, payable from subjects in Blackburn Street, Plantation, for the purpose of providing a travelling studentship for the furtherance of the study of ancient classic architecture, with special reference to the principles illustrated in Mr. Thomson's works. This studentship is competed for every third year, and is open to Architectural Students between the ages of 18 and 25 years, residing in the United Kingdom, and qualified as described in the Deed of Trust."

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